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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the effect of the integration of media projects into an existing language arts curriculum on the year-end achievement of fifth and sixth grade students at the University of Wyoming laboratory school. During their communication arts block of language arts, reading, and literature, each student completed a minimum of four projects involving slide tape, video, filmstrip, and super eight film. Production work groups of one to eight students planned their productions and wrote the accompanying scripts. Achievement for both the experimental and the control groups was measured by the Metropolitan Achievement Test (1978 edition). The experimental group showed a significant increase in both reading and language arts achievement test scores; however, only the medium reading achievement experimental group showed a statistically significant increase in reading scores. The added time required for the media projects did not require the elimination of existing objectives. The use of media projects increased student interest and motivation as observed by the teachers involved, and reluctant learners became involved in language activities, especially reading, writing, and speaking. It was concluded that students gained valuable technical knowledge about media and greater understanding of the communications process. Five references are listed. (LMM)

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WILL THE INTEGRATION OF MEDIA PROJECTS INTO AN EXISTING LANGUAGE ARTS CURRICULUM AFFECT YEAR-END ACHIEVEMENT?

A Research Study

by

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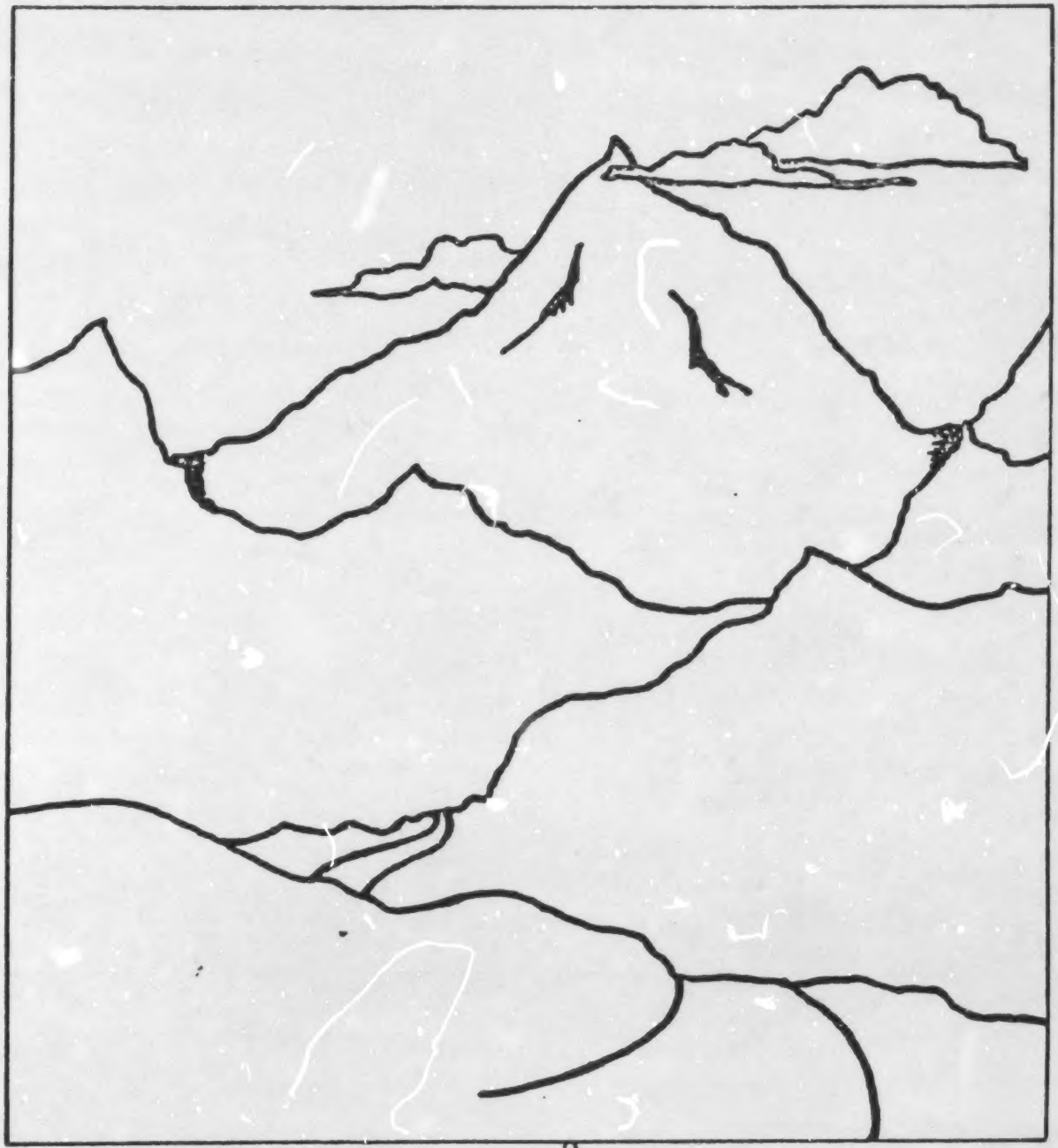

Cover art work by Julie Collins

WILL THE INTEGRATION OF MEDIA PROJECTS INTO AN EXISTING LANGAUAGE ARTS CURRICULUM AFFECT YEAR-END ACHIEVEMENT?

We live in a multimedia world. Technology has changed our whole concept of communication. It is an exciting time. Thus, a decision was made to include a media project as a portion of our reading and language arts program. We noticed that motivation was extremely high as the students worked on their projects; therefore, we decided to explore the possibility that this might show a difference in their achievement. In addition, we were concerned about whether the added time required for the project would necessitate eliminating some of existing objectives--a concern because of the back to basics movement.

EXPERIMENTATION

The implications stated above led us to formulate the following experiment: Will the integration of media projects into an existing language arts curriculum affect year-end achievment?

Experimental Group

The fifth and sixth grades at the University of Wyoming Laboratory School were used as subjects. The Communication Arts Block (language arts, reading, and literature) was taught by three instructors. Each instructor had one group each of high, average, and low reading achievement students. The University School's stated objectives in language arts, reading and literature were followed by all instructors. As a partial vehicle for achieving these objectives, each student would,

throughout the year, complete a minimum of four different projects involving slide tape, video, filmstrip, and super eight. These production work groups ranged in size from one to eight students. The media projects were to be completed any time during the school year. Most groups spread their productions out over the course of the year.

Students planned their productions and wrote the accompanying scripts. The photographs varied from actual scenes, to animation, to student drawn illustrations. The content varied from highly informational to fictional. All productions included an audio component. The filmstrips and slide shows had tapes, while the super-eight and video tapes were recorded "live".

The basic procedure followed by groups producing media projects was:

1. The instructor announced to the reading/language arts sub-group that they were going to be doing media projects. The students were encouraged to choose a topic for their production centering around a "theme" or a skill that they were currently studying.

2. Students broke into small groups, brainstormed ideas, selected a topic and obtained teacher permission to pursue it.

3. The groups then discussed the various possibilities for their presentations. When general concensus was reached each student selected an area of concentration to research. (Examples: one small group chose a filmstrip about NATURAL PHENOMENA which can create disaster for Man. Areas of concentration chosen by individual students were volcanoes, earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes, forest fires, etc. In fictional

productions the story line was agreed upon and each student chose a segment of the story.)

4. An allotted amount of time and/or pictures per student was agreed upon to keep the production a reasonable length. (This varied according to medium, and number of students in each group.) The students were individually responsible for presenting their ideas for their part on index cards. These cards included a rough sketch and a brief statement indicating what information was to be portrayed by the picture.

5. Students met together and pinned cards on a bulletin board in the order they initially thought they should be presented. Another brainstorming session occurred with cards easily being rearranged until the group was satisfied with the sequence. (This is a technique often referred to as storyboarding.)

6. The final graphics (i.e., student art work, selected published pictures, animation, live production) were produced and photographed. The final scripts were written, approved by the instructor, taped, reviewed, and edited.

7. Finished media projects were shown to the rest of the groups.

Sources found valuable in aiding production of media projects are listed at the end of this article.

Control Group

The control group consisted of the fifth and sixth grade classes at the same school the previous year. Grouping procedures were identical. The same objectives in language arts, reading, and literature were followed by all instructors. The control group had not produced media projects.

ANALYSIS OF DATA*

The collected data include the students' percentile rank in reading comprehension and the percentile rank in language arts on the Metropolitan Achievement Test, 1978. Only the scores from students completing pretests and post-tests in both reading and language arts were used.

The control and experimental group data were first examined to see if there was any statistical difference in pretest achievement. A t-test was used (α =5%). It showed no statistical difference in pretest scores in either reading or language arts. Next the differences between the pretest and the post-test performances for the control and the experimental groups were analyzed. The result was statistically significant (even at $\alpha \leq 1\%$). Finally, the differences in students' performance on pre- and post-tests for the experimental and control groups were analyzed separately to see if difference occurred for students of varying reading abilities. For the high reading groups there was no significant difference if α =5% was used (t-test was between α =5% and 10%). For the medium groups the test showed a significant difference in favor of the experimental group, even at α =1%. The test showed no significant difference between the low groups in reading. In language arts all three groups showed a significant difference in favor of the experimental group (high group $\alpha \leq 1\%$, medium group $\alpha \leq 3\%$, low group $\alpha \leq 1\%$). Figure 1 is a summary of the average group performances (%ile rank) on the Metropolitan Achievement Test, 1978.

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*Our appreciation to Sergei S. Kasakow, Ph.D., Economics, for his assistance with the statistical analysis.

Figure 1

	n	Pre-Test Reading	Post Test Reading	Pre Test Language Arts	Post Test Language Arts
Control Group (1979-80)	43	72.51	76.48	73.16	70.42
Experimental Group (1980-81)	42	64.64	74.6	56.0	67.19

CONCLUSIONS

1. Students' achievement as measured by the Metropolitan Achievement Test (1978 edition) showed a significant increase for the experimental group in both reading and language arts.

2. The high, medium, and low experimental groups all showed a significant increase in language arts achievement. Although all experimental reading groups showed positive results, only the medium group showed a statistically significant increase in reading scores.

3. The concern that added time required for media projects would necessitate eliminating some existing objectives was unfounded.

4. The use of media projects increases student interest and motivation, as observed by involved teachers.

5. Reluctant learners particularly became involved in language activities, especially reading, writing, and speaking, which they normally avoided.

6. Students gained valuable technical knowledge about media and greater understanding of the media communications process.

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